The 105mm is rapidly becoming my 'go to' lens, especially for close-up head shots. It's clear, sharp, stabilised and a great price too.
*Canon 5D Mk III, Sigma 105mm lens, 1/100sec @ f/22, ISO 200*

FIELD TEST

# SIGMA 105MM F/2.8 MACRO

Pro fashion and beauty photographer Dave Kai-Piper extols the virtues of one of his favourite lenses, Sigma's fast prime tele-macro

BY DAVE KAI-PIPER

**£549**

**WWW.SIGMA-IMAGING-UK.COM**

Using the wonderful bokeh, Macro work is a joy to shoot on the 105mm. The stabilising feature of the lens really helps to get these shots.
*Nikon D800, Sigma 105mm lens, 1/800sec @ f/4.5, ISO 400*

Bringing the detail out on the black top is easy to do with a lens as clear as the Sigma.
*Nikon D800, Sigma 105mm lens, 1/80sec @ f/25, ISO 160*

Shooting full-length portraits are helped by dropping the background out of focus.
*Nikon D800, Sigma 105mm, 1/250sec @ f/3.5, ISO 100*

It is said that 'pros' prefer prime lenses owing to the extra sharpness achievable from a lens that has been designed to excel at just one focal length, rather than be average over many. As optics develop, things may change over time but for now primes do seem to have an extra razor-sharp quality.

The 105mm in particular is an interesting focal length, especially for a portrait photographer. I recently shot a wedding using only the Sigma 28mm and Sigma 105mm prime lenses. This worked out to be a great choice, and I used the 105mm far more than I thought I would. With the minimum focus distance being 30cm or so, it did prove to be a great all-round lens.

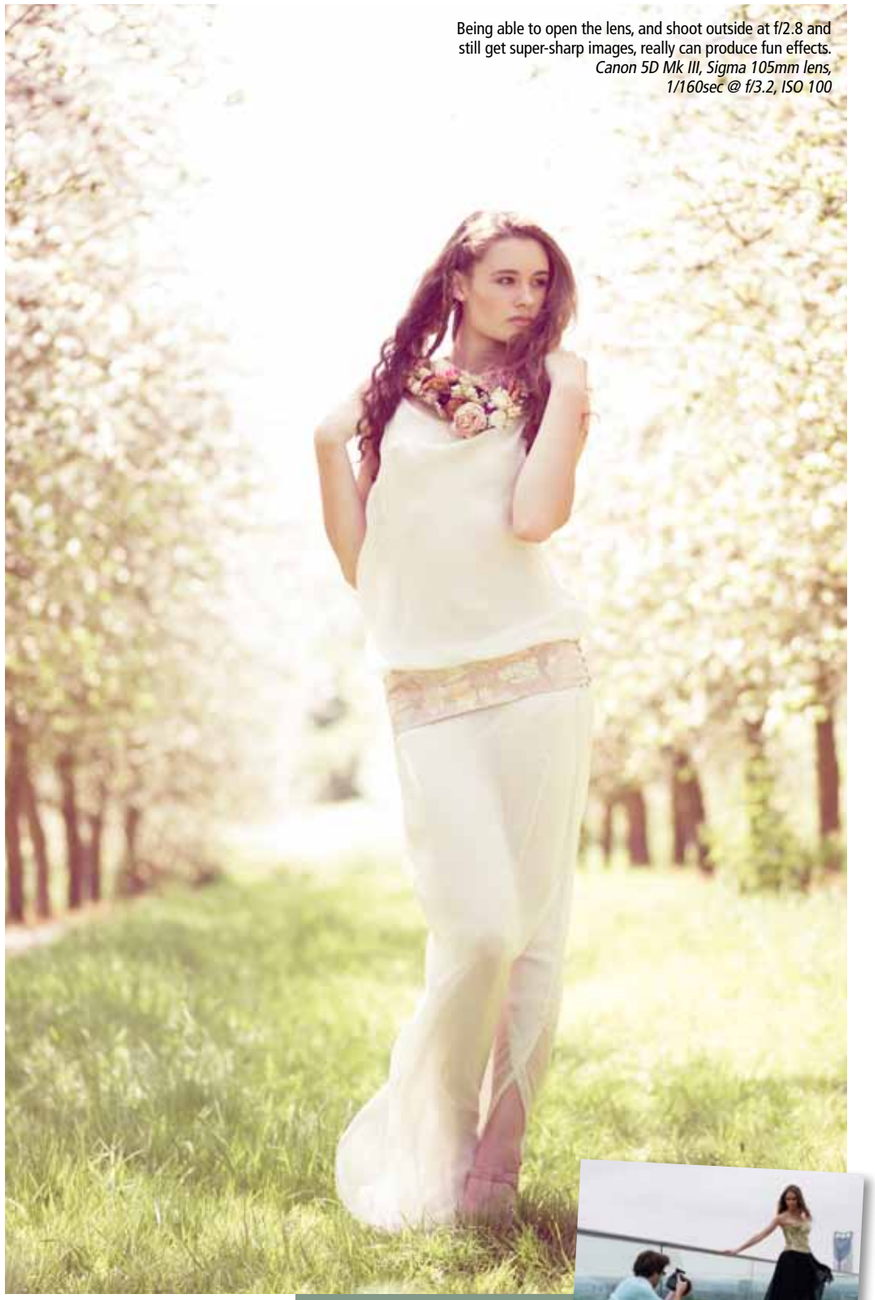
The 105mm F2.8 EX DG OS HSM Macro, to give it its full name, is packed full of the latest technology. It has High refractive index SLD (Special Low Dispersion) glass to correct chromatic aberration, spherical aberration and field curvature, and a fast AF which is nearly silent in operation.

Even though it's a macro lens I like to use the 105mm for portraiture – it has just the perfect degree of magnification when used with full-frame cameras, and with APS-C cameras it is equivalent to about 150mm, which is still good for tight crops. When used at wider apertures the background blows out really nicely, and even fully wide at f/2.8 the focal point is really sharp.

Unsurprisingly the 105mm excels at macro, which is what it's designed for. It's best used on manual focus while on a tripod, of course, but Sigma will tell you that the stabilisation will correct for up to four stops. This is hard to check and prove, but from my experience I have no reason to disagree. This is very handy if you are shooting handheld macro. Sometimes when doing location macro work of flowers or wildlife, you just don't have time to set things up. It should also be noted that this is a wonderful lens for video work due to the super-smooth focus pull.

At £549 I don't think the lens is expensive, for what it is, though it isn't cheap either. If you want a long prime, it is hard to think of a better, more versatile choice than the Sigma 105mm f/2.8 Macro – with the possible exception of the Sigma 150mm f/2.8 EX DG OS. But maybe this is a little long to give the all-round usability that the 105mm gives you.

So overall, what is not to like about a wide, fast lens that is bright from tip to tip and razor-sharp across the whole range, with 31cm minimum focus and 1:1 macro, while stable at super-low shutter speeds? If I could only ever have three lenses in my bag, this would be one of them. (The others would be a 50mm prime and the 24-70mm f/2.8.)



Being able to open the lens, and shoot outside at f/2.8 and still get super-sharp images, really can produce fun effects.
*Canon 5D Mk III, Sigma 105mm lens, 1/160sec @ f/3.2, ISO 100*

**DAVE KAI-PIPER**

**Dave Kai-Piper is a professional photographer who has shot a range of advertising campaigns for print and web, as well as running photography and image-editing workshops. Dave's artistic influences are film-makers and musicians, which is something that is brought into his own work. For more information see Dave's website at: www.davepiper.org.uk**